

Thursday, July 8, 2004  
Local News

## **First Yellow Alert for St. George**

Power department issues alert

Power prices could soar if residents do not conserve more energy By BRAD PLOTHOW  
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ST. GEORGE -- Power prices could soar along with temperatures if residents do not conserve more power. The St. George Water and Power Department is expecting today's city energy use to peak at 131 megawatts, which constitutes the first "yellow alert" since the Dixie Conservation Alert program was implemented on June 1. The "yellow alert" is part of a three-level alert system devised by city staff. It means residents are being asked to reduce their daytime energy use.

Utah Power has headed a program for Northern Utahns, similar to the Dixie Conservation Alert, for the past few years. St. George Conservation Coordinator Rene Fleming said power consumption across Southern Utah is different than it is along the Wasatch Front, so she advised area residents to follow updates from the Dixie Conservation Alert program rather than the state's Power Forward program.

One of the effects of Southern Utah's robust growth trend has been greater potential to tap out power resources and leave consumers at the mercy of open-market energy premiums, said Fleming.

Many Southern Utahns are already finding ways to conserve.

Dixie State College recently made the transition to a four-day workweek for the summer months to save on utility costs. The school initiated the shortened week last summer. College officials estimate that \$40,000 was saved on energy-related expenses in 2003 because some buildings could be shut down, cutting air conditioning and electricity costs.

Cedar City business owner Brian Jorgenson felt the effects of a price hike in April; he used to shell out \$600 a month in energy costs to run his bookstore.

Then he had AC DC Electric retrofit his old incandescent lights with T-8 fluorescent bulbs.

"We were paying a tremendous power bill, but I just got my first power bill (since the retrofit) and it's down by about \$70," said Jorgenson last month. He expects to trim his power bill to \$450 a month.

AC DC Electric staff completed two retrofitting projects, and have 26 planned, as part of a project in coordination with Utah Power to lower power consumption by businesses.

Southern Utah's vigorous growth pattern has contributed to Fleming's concern about limited energy resources. She said power lines' carrying capacities could be stretched due to large loads.

"They can only carry so much energy," said Fleming. "As demand increases, then we have some transmission constraints."

Fleming said the peak summer energy load could reach 155 MW in St. George, about 19 MWs higher than last year's high peak and 30 MWs higher than average. Air conditioning units -- on the rise with homes and businesses -- contribute largely to higher energy demands, said Fleming.

The St. George Water and Power Department devised a four-part plan in anticipation of minor to major energy constraints, beginning with voluntary conservation by residents and climaxing with a rolling brownout during major shortages. The city also plans to run daily energy conservation updates in The Spectrum throughout the summer.